

Michael F. Easley  
Governor



State of North Carolina  
Office of the Governor

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**GOV. EASLEY DECLARES COLUMBUS COUNTY A STATE DISASTER AREA**  
***Loans and State Grants Will Be Available For Families***

**RALEIGH** – Gov. Mike Easley today declared a state disaster for Columbus County to help pay funeral and medical expenses as well as home repairs for families who suffered losses as a result of the November 16 tornado. In addition, the Governor today requested and has already received a U.S. Small Business Administration disaster declaration that makes low interest loans available for repairs.

“The tornado devastated the Riegelwood community and killed eight people,” Easley said. “North Carolina can and will step in to provide the financial assistance our people need to get back on their feet and repair their homes and lives.”

Residents of Columbus County who suffered losses in the storm now qualify for the state’s individual assistance disaster aid program. This declaration means the state covers the cost for essential needs, with a maximum eligible award of \$28,000. Home owners are eligible for real and personal property damages and renters are eligible for personal property damages as well. Grants are also available to pay for medical as well as funeral expenses for those who lost family members.

**Applications for state grants or SBA loans can be made at the Riegelwood Baptist Church beginning tomorrow at 12 noon. Citizens can also call toll-free at 1-800-659-2955 to apply for an SBA loan.**

Anyone with questions about the status of the recovery or how to donate to the relief effort can call the Governor’s Emergency Bilingual Hotline at 1-888-835-9966 Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.

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